

VZCZCXYZ0001
RR RUEHWEB

DE RUEHBH #0059 0501940
ZNR UUUUU ZZH
R 191940Z FEB 10
FM AMEMBASSY NASSAU
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC 0382
INFO EC CARICOM COLLECTIVE

UNCLAS NASSAU 000059

SIPDIS

E.O. 12958: N/A

TAGS: [PGOV](#) [PREL](#) [BF](#)

SUBJECT: Bahamas Election Cliffhanger Results in Political Stalemate

[1](#)1. A by-election in the constituency of Elizabeth resulted in a stalemate for both major political parties. A recount was ordered after the initial count of approximately 3,200 ballots on February 16 resulted in a one vote lead for the Free National Movement (FNM) candidate Dr. Duane Sands. Prime Minister Hubert Ingraham decided not to declare victory until a recount was conducted. The FNM were ahead by two votes after a recount that lasted two days. The opposition party candidate Ryan Pinder is contesting five votes, which if ruled valid by the Election Court could result in a win for the opposition Progressive Liberal Party (PLP). The PLP have invoked section 69 of the Parliamentary Elections Act, which allows the court to decide on protest votes if a candidate's margin of victory does not exceed his opponent's number of protest votes.

[1](#)2. Opposition Leader Perry Christie told the press that the recount dispute would end up in Election Court and he called for improving electoral rules after what he referred to as widespread "corruption and intimidation" by the government in the lead up to the election. The citizenship of Ryan Pinder was a contentious issue as the government questioned his loyalty to The Bahamas and third party candidates suggested he had a conflict of interest due to his ties to his U.S. law firm. Voter turn out for the by election was only 64 percent compared with previous turnouts of over 90 percent. Although third party candidates only secured less than five percent of the votes, these were votes that could have made the difference for one of the major parties.

AVANT